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condition to the reception of any allowance from the school funds which they have provided ; but it is not believed. It is even said that such a tax is voluntarily imposed, and sometimes to double and treble the amount which is required ; but this is regarded as altogether apocryphal, and almost as an imposition upon the credulity of a Connecticut tax-payer. Our hope for Connecticut is, we confess, in Rhode Island. When in Woonsocket and Chepachet successful schools shall have been established, and shall be more liberally supported even than at this moment, then let a Connecticut legislature be transported, bodily, by railroad to these towns, to see for themselves what has been accomplished, even in Rhode Island, and by the voluntary action of the people themselves ! If this *ultima ratio* will not convince and arouse them, we know not what method remains to be attempted.

ART. IX. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *History of the Greek Alphabet, with Remarks on Greek Orthography and Pronunciation.* By E. A. SOPHOCLES, A. M. Cambridge : George Nichols. 1848. 12mo. pp. 136.

In this little volume, Mr. Sophocles has embodied the results of a most acute, learned, and original investigation of the alphabet and the pronunciation of the Greek language. Many good scholars would probably consider these topics dry and uninteresting ; but in reality they are quite curious, and when well handled, rise into importance. The history of alphabetic writing is almost the history of human thought ; and the theory of its origin and the date of its introduction into Europe connect themselves with literary problems which have exercised the ingenuity of the most learned scholars. The question, whether the Homeric poems — the oldest monument of Greek literature — were at first committed to writing, or merely preserved by tradition and memory, until they were gathered up and arranged by the wits of a later age, depends, in a great measure, for its solution, upon the earlier or later period to which our researches assign this art. That there was a long period of time during which the Indo-Germanic races, in the chain of which the Hellenic tribes formed the most important link, were without the use of letters,

is clearly enough proved by the fact, that while the elemental principles of their languages remained the same, their alphabetic writings diverged widely, — the languages doubtless having been reduced to written forms by wholly independent alphabetical inventions, at remote periods of time, and at great geographical distances from each other. Thus, the parent form from which the Greek and Sanscrit descended must have been unfolded in great perfection long before either the one or the other became a written language; so surprising are the resemblances and affinities that have been traced, under the disguises of totally independent alphabets, not only in radical words, but in those principles of conjugation and inflection which especially show an identity of origin; the Sanscrit, in the course of time, having been reduced to writing in an alphabet of complicated and elaborate structure, and the Hellenic races having adopted the simpler forms of another family of nations, the Semitic.

Whatever be the length we assign to this unlettered period, there can be very little doubt that alphabetic writing, among the Semitic nations, ascends to a very early age, and that it was introduced among these nations from Egypt, where something approaching alphabetic writing existed in an unfathomable antiquity. The arts of Egypt, Syria, and Phœnicia were well known to the Greeks at the earliest date of which any record has descended to us, being almost coeval with the oldest myths and traditions; and among other arts, why not the most astonishing of all, the art of writing?

Mr. Sophocles has brought together, in the first part of his book, “the traditions and fictions concerning the alphabet,” as they are found in the ancient authors, both Roman and Greek. The view of the subject thus presented is both amusing and instructive; for the original words of the writers are brought together, and their opinions, conjectures, and assumptions grouped, with much ingenuity and research. If these numerous notices do not entirely decide the extreme antiquity of the art, they at least show the universally prevailing opinion of the ancients themselves, that alphabetic writing, if it did not, in the words of Dogberry, come by nature, yet originated amongst the earliest arts in which the human mind sought to embody its primeval energies.

From these uncertain lights, Mr. Sophocles proceeds to examine the testimonies afforded by early monuments. He traces the modifications and additions which the alphabet underwent among the tribes who spoke the different dialects of the Greek, and the improvements that were made from age to age; and he has illustrated all these topics with admirable learning and philo-

logical skill. In this branch of the discussion, Mr. Sophocles has availed himself of the important aid furnished him by the recent researches of scholars in the department of *epigraphic* literature. Boeckh's great work, in particular, the *Corpus Inscriptionum Græcarum*, is a treasure-house of philological facts, from which illustrations are drawn to clear up obscure points, and to correct the erroneous statements of the grammarians. Indeed, nothing is omitted by the author of this little book which can in any way exhibit the true history of the alphabet. The sections which contain the remarks on orthography will be found very curious and valuable; these remarks are also based on the indisputable authority of the inscriptions, which are of the nature not merely of contemporaneous, but autograph documents.

The last part of the book treats of Pronunciation. The able and satisfactory discussion here embodied will meet a want long felt and loudly expressed by scholars. The proper pronunciation of the Greek language has been a disputed question ever since the days of Reuchlin and Erasmus, and no one conclusion has been generally acquiesced in by literary men. The practical result of all the learning which has been expended or wasted upon the subject is, that the nations of Europe give the Greek letters the sounds which prevail in their own languages, and the accent which belongs to the Latin; than which it would be impossible to imagine a more barbarous incongruity. It is as if an Englishman should learn the French with the sounds of the German and the accent of the Chinese. The written accents have been wholly left out of the systems of pronunciation prevalent in most European nations, having been supposed to be inconsistent with the laws of quantity; but this supposition shows what singularly confused notions of accent and quantity have been entertained, the fact being that we do not observe quantity even in our pronunciation of the Latin. We merely *accent* the penultimate when long, and the antepenultimate when the penult is short; but we do not mark the quantity at all, except that the quantity of the penult is *inferred* from the place where the accent rests.

Mr. Sophocles has endeavoured to ascertain the true pronunciation of the ancient Greek. Any such attempt must naturally be limited to an approximation; for the actual pronunciation must have varied, to a considerable extent, with difference of time and distance of place. This is the universal condition of language. All, therefore, which can be expected or desired is to ascertain the general facts of the pronunciation in the best ages of Greek literature; and this Mr. Sophocles has done, with as much precision as the nature of the problem admits. In the course of the

investigation, he explains the prevailing pronunciation of the Romaic or modern Greek, and points out in what respects this differs from that of the ancient. The conclusions which he has drawn as to the ancient pronunciation are founded on descriptions of the ancient writers, more particularly the minute and careful statements of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and of the old grammarians. In a notice like the present, we have no room to go into the particulars of the inquiry; we shall barely remark, that Mr. Sophocles seems to us to have settled all the important questions beyond the possibility of refutation, and to have furnished the Greek scholars of the present day with the means of adopting and establishing a uniform system of pronunciation, combining in a satisfactory degree the elements of the ancient sounds of the language, and reconciling the conflicting claims of accent and quantity. We hope the attention of scholars will be given to this subject, and that a commencement, at least, will immediately be made, in attempting to pronounce Greek a little like the Greeks.

One thing is certain; the choice will be between a system essentially resting on the conclusions of Mr. Sophocles, and that of the modern Greeks. The latter, with all the deviations from the ancient which unquestionably characterize it, has strong claims upon the favor of scholars, from the fact that it is the pronunciation of an existing nation, — the descendants of the ancient Hellenes, and speaking a language formed out of the *débris* of the classic Greek. The modern Greek will be more and more studied, not only on account of its intimate relation to the ancient, but because it is the medium of communication between the nations of the East, and because it contains and embodies an original literature, destined probably to increase in importance, and to take its place within the recognized circle of modern European culture. The pronunciation founded on Mr. Sophocles's investigations would be closely allied to the existing pronunciation of the Romaic, — so closely, indeed, that it would be very easy to pass from the one to the other. On the whole, we should prefer his system to that of the modern Greeks.

The book which we have thus hastily noticed should be the companion to the Greek Grammar, wherever the language is taught. Besides its great merits in a philological point of view, it is a model of compact, clear, idiomatic English writing. The purity of its style would be remarkable even for one of Anglo-Saxon birth.